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Thematic issues

Statement submitted by the International Abolitionist Federation, International Alliance of Women, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, and Soroptimist International, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; Associated Country Women of the World, Centre for Women, the Earth, the Divine, European Women's Lobby, International Council of Jewish Women, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation of University Women, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Socialist International Women, Women's International Zionist Organization, World Federation of Methodist, and Uniting Church Women, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; and European Union of Women, and International Inner Wheel, non-governmental organizations on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

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We, the above-named international non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, welcome the decision of the Commission on the Status of Women to focus at its forty-fifth session on the theme "Gender, HIV/AIDS and racism".

HIV infection is spreading at an alarming rate, especially among women worldwide. This has disastrous effects on the very fabric of society and causes immeasurable suffering.

We therefore urge Member States:

(a) To step up information campaigns concerning the risks of female genital mutilation, unprotected sex and any other sexual practices which increase the danger of infection;

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(b) To actively support non-governmental organizations in their efforts to disseminate information at the grass-roots level, inter alia, through street theatres, popular music and other appropriate educational means;

(c) To promote women's access to education and information and empower them to claim their right to physical and emotional integrity and to counteract harmful traditional practices;

(d) To disseminate specific information to HIV-positive women about the advantages of the combination therapy, caesarean section, abstention from breastfeeding and abortion;

(e) To request the World Trade Organization to allow, in cooperation with the World Health Organization, the production of generic medicines, especially in countries severely affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, in order to reduce considerably the cost of treatment of persons infected with the HIV virus.

The issue of gender discrimination and all other forms of discrimination, such as racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, must be given specific attention and analysis. Women are frequently the targets of multiple discrimination because of their gender and because of colour, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation etc.

We therefore urge Member States:

(a) To stress the importance of formal and informal education in combating racism;

(b) To provide training courses for teachers, police, armed forces and the personnel of other State-related institutions, on combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance;

(c) To cooperate closely in these efforts with non-governmental organizations;

(d) To take appropriate measures to curb the dissemination of violence and hate propagation through the media, especially the Internet;

(e) To take the necessary measures to eliminate expressions of racism, xenophobia, racial discrimination and other forms of intolerance from all educational material.

The Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, along with other Vienna-based NGO committees, will organize an international seminar on racism and xenophobia on 7 May 2001 at the United Nations Office at Vienna, as a contribution to the preparatory process for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, to be held in Durban, South Africa, in the autumn of 2001.